

The University of Chicago

THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENTS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

1937

By
LEO C. ROSTEN

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The Social Composition of Washington Correspondents

By Leo C. Rosten

Mr. Rosten, a contributor to the Public Opinion Quarterly, Harper's, the New Republic and other magazines, spent more than a year as a Fellow of the Social Science Research Council making the study on which this article is based.

THE newspaper man is a man sensitized to the observation of aspects of the real world, with a talent for translating segments of reality into the grammar of "stories." In the inflections which creep into his recording of events, there are imbedded, however obscurely, a personality and an autobiography. Under the arid mobilization of facts in a news dispatch on the budget there is a construct of individual temperament. The dominant impulse of the scientist is to know; the driving motivation of the journalist is to tell. What he tells, what he considers worth telling, and how he tells it are the products of a social-psychological structure of desire, calculation and inhibition.

The material which follows presents selected data on 127 newspaper correspondents in Washington (representing 186 leading daily newspapers, all the press associations and all syndicates, and including the leading columnists), which they supplied by answering two lengthy questionnaires I submitted to them in 1936.¹ This is a sample more than large enough to permit

¹I was interested only in the political correspondents for daily American newspapers of a general circulation of more than 75,000. There are 504 accredited newspaper men listed in the *Congressional Directory*. But after excluding newspaper men for trade journals, foreign papers, the foreign-language press and magazines and feature and editorial writers, and the many reporters for papers in Washington, D. C., who do not cover specifically political news, about 170 were considered eligible for this study.

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generalization about the press corps in the capital.²

These data afford new insight into the sociology of the press corps, and suggest verifiable analytic statements about what is loosely called "the psychology of journalists" and the character of journalism.

* * *

Words are the journalist's tools and it would seem a defensible hypothesis that newspaper men are drawn from a psychological environment which placed a premium upon articulacy. One would thus expect many reporters to be the children of parents who handled ideas rather than things: teachers, clergymen, lawyers, editors rather than farmers or industrial workers.³ One would expect newspaper men to have been exposed to the attraction

professional, proprietary or clerical groups, according to the occupational categories of Professor William F. Ogburn,⁴ the so-called "white-collar" class. Fifty-five (44.7 per cent) correspondents' fathers were members of a profession. Of the professional group, 14 (11.3 per cent) were editors or newspaper men, 13 (10.5 per cent) were lawyers. The labor population, including skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers, contributed only 14 men to the corps, exactly the number contributed by newspaper men alone. The farmers of the country produced but 9.7 per cent of the group.

These figures gain significance from the fact that in 1900, the date closest to the average year of birth of the newspaper men studied,⁵ the

TABLE I*

<i>Occupational Group</i>	<i>Percentage of Corps Contributed</i>	<i>Percentage of Population in 1900</i>
Professions	44.7	4.3
Labor (skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled) . .	11.3	48.4
Farmers	9.7	35.6

* For 123 correspondents. The proprietary group and the clerical group are omitted from this table.

of talk, particularly talk about social and political affairs, in homes with literate preoccupations. And one would expect them to have middle class origins, rather than stemming from the ranks of manual labor: deference for verbalization and a drive to achieve facility in it would be more pronounced in the former than the latter.

In the light of this approach it is not wholly fortuitous that out of 123 Washington correspondents, 97 (76.3 per cent) are the children of

professions formed only 4.3 per cent of the country's population, whereas the farm population was 35.6 per cent and the labor population totalled 48.4 per cent.⁶ If we tabulate these figures side by side, as in Table I, the emphases become sharper.

⁴ In "The Family," *Recent Social Trends in the United States* (New York and London: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1934), one vol. ed., p. 685. Ogburn's categories are Professional, Proprietary, Clerical, Skilled Labor, Semi-Skilled Labor, Unskilled Labor.

⁵ The average age of the 127 correspondents is 41.7; the median line, dividing the older from the younger one-half of the group, falls between 37 and 38.

⁶ Robert F. Harrel, "Factors Making for Success in Journalism," in *Vocational Studies in Journalism*, by Robert F. Harrel and Walter B. Pitkin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), pp. 101-102.

² The sample, as explained above, is really 127 out of 170.

³ See the remarks of Harold D. Lasswell, "The Person: Subject and Object of Propaganda," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May, 1933, pp. 190-91.

Compare these figures to those of Robert F. Harrel, who conducted a study of 505 American editors, editorial writers, department managers, managing editors, special writers and others. Out of his 505 cases 32.0 per cent had fathers of a professional status, as compared to our 43.3 per cent. Fathers of 8.3 per cent were journalists, as compared to 11 per cent among the Washington correspondents.⁷ By this comparison about 11.3 per cent more of the fathers of the Washington press corps were in the professions than was true of a sample of other journalists in the country, and about 2.7 per cent more were newspaper men themselves. Both studies demonstrate the high percentage of journalists whose fathers were members of a profession or a "white collar group."

THE economic strata from which the press corps came are equally interesting. Families of 57.5 per cent of the correspondents had incomes of \$2,500 or more while the newspaper men were in grammar school; 62.1 per cent while they were in high school; 64.4 per cent while they were in college or of college age. For the same three periods the family incomes of less than \$2,500 accounted for 42.3 per cent, 37.7 per cent, and 35.4 per cent respectively.

The significance of these figures may be suggested by the fact that according to the earliest analysis of income stratifications, the 1918 estimates of the National Bureau of Economic Research, upon which economists still depend, 92 per cent

of the gainfully employed earned less than \$2,500 a year. Only 2 per cent earned \$5,000 or more.⁸ The average annual earning figures for employed wage earners as compiled by Paul H. Douglas and F. T. Jenkinson show that in 1910 the average annual earning per wage earner was \$573; in 1918 it was \$997; and in 1920 it was \$1,337. As late as 1928 it was only \$1,405 per year.⁹ It is safe to conclude that the correspondents came from families which had incomes considerably above those of the averages for the country's wage-earners as a whole.

The size of the communities in which the correspondents were born and reared, and in which they received their elementary education, is of relevance. More than a third—38.5 per cent—of the corps was born in towns which had a population of less than 2,500 in 1900.¹⁰ Almost exactly one-half (49.6 per

⁸ Quoted by Robert S. Lynd, "The People as Consumers," *Recent Social Trends in the United States* (New York and London: Whittlesey House, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1934), one vol. ed., p. 860.

⁹ *The Movement of Money and Real Earnings in the United States*, quoted by Leo Wolman and Gustav Peck in "Labor Groups in the Social Structure," *ibid.*, p. 817.

¹⁰ As a labor-saving device population figures were used for 1900, the census year which corresponds most closely to the average age of the newspaper men studied. This is a necessary and unavoidable compromise for several reasons: 1) Population figures are not available for many towns and cities prior to 1900; 2) figures are not available to answer this question: What proportions of the present-day population were born in communities of different sizes?; 3) it would have involved elaborate and cumbersome statistical techniques to weight population figures for the year of birth of each separate correspondent, and to proportionally these figures according to (a) the percentage relationship of towns of any given population figure to the general population of the United States at the same time-point; (b) the percentage of living persons born in localities of a given size at any given date. Obviously a population of 5,000 in 1890 has a meaning different from that of the same population in 1910. The present compromise, using 1900 as a controlled date of reference, serves our purpose well enough to make a greater refinement of method unnecessary.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151. 36.1 per cent of Harrel's subjects were editors; 27.5 per cent were managing editors; 8.6 per cent were editorial writers. Special writers, Washington correspondents and feature writers made up 8.5 per cent.

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cent) come from communities of less than 10,000; 62.2 per cent from those of less than 25,000. The number born and reared in cities of 100,000 or more totalled only 16.6 per cent of the group.¹¹

It has often been remarked that Indiana contributes an extraordinarily high proportion of journalists to the nation. An analysis of the Washington correspondents supports this. Indiana ranked first, when the states were listed according to the number of correspondents born in each, with 10.2 per cent of the corps (distributed evenly between the ages of 28 and 63). Illinois was second with 9.4 per cent. The preëminence of Indiana is increased by the facts that (a) only seven Indiana papers were included in the study (3.7 per cent of the 186); (b) in 1930 Indiana had only 2.6 per cent of the population of the nation; in 1900 her population was approximately 3 per cent.¹²

The reasons for Indiana's curious position as an incubator of literary and journalistic figures has never been fully explained. Professor Harold D. Lasswell suggests one possible explanation¹³: Indiana has long been a "balance of power" state, a strategic lever in national elections. As Louise Overacker and Merriam and Gosnell have shown in their studies of national political parties and elections,¹⁴ campaign funds out

of proportion to the size of the state, or to its votes in the electoral college, have traditionally been poured into Indiana. This fact may account for the political consciousness and talents of Indianans, and the prominence of politics as an attractive career. It seems possible that the intelligences of the middle class, rather than go into law, finance or business, as would be the case in metropolitan centers, are drawn to those occupations which confer prestige upon the felicitous use of words: politics or writing.¹⁵

Reporting is, at bottom, a career compact of an essentially antagonistic attitude to the inertia, log-rolling and ineptitude of the two major parties. Scratch a journalist and you find a reformer. To what type of political consciousness were the Washington correspondents exposed in their impressionable years? The political identification of the fathers of the press corps shows that 72.7 per cent were either Democrats or Republicans (44 were Republicans, 41 Democrats), 13.6 per cent were independent, and the rest were distributed in categories described as liberal, socialist, progressive, radical, labor or "no party." Since the combined Republican-Democratic vote from 1896 to 1912 was approximately 98 per cent of the total vote cast¹⁶ (1896-1912 may be taken to encompass the most impressionable years of the majority of the correspondents), the 30 per cent of the correspondents' fathers who were

¹¹ There were obviously few metropolitan centers in 1900 from which the members of the corps could come.

¹² 1930 population figures were taken from the 1937 *World Almanac*, p. 272. Percentages for 1900 were computed from gross population figures.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 190.

¹⁴ See Louise Overacker, *Money in Elections* (New York, 1932), and Charles E. Merriam and Harold F. Gosnell, *Political Parties* (New York, 1929) *passim*.

¹⁵ This would not, of course, explain why the same phenomenon is not to be observed in Iowa or Kansas.

¹⁶ Computed from election figures in the 1937 *World Almanac*, pp. 909-10.

not affiliated with one of the two orthodox political parties represents a marked divergence from the general political pattern of the country. The large proportion of teachers, lawyers, doctors and journalists among the fathers of the correspondents makes this plausible.

The future will probably see a larger percentage of journalists drawn from the ranks of liberals, independents, socialists and third-party sympathizers. The intensification of crises precipitates discontent with the circumlocutions of "respectable" political parties in the intellectuals of the middle class, caught between the hammer of hard-pressed industrial capitalism and the anvil of proletarian violence. Dissatisfaction is communicated to the sons of intellectuals in the atmosphere of homes characterized by the rising insecurity of middle class men who handle symbols for a living. The sons of lawyers, clergymen, journalists and teachers may well be possessed of heightened reformist energies impelling them to embark upon a career which throws them into vital contact with the organs of the body politic, and which opens the possibility of "tearing away the veils of pretense and hypocrisy," exposing politics and politicians in the disenchanted light of "hard-boiled" journalism.

Journalism is often called a "game" in the argot of its practitioners. But many newspaper men like to embellish their status by insisting upon the designation of their trade as a "profession." Since the first requisite of a profession is the exclusion of the unfit, "the profession of journalism" is chiefly a convenient term of reference. The pro-

fessional aspect of newspaper work may be defended by the recognition that it requires a congeries of skills and techniques. But it is a profession with no professional standards, no professional discipline, no examining or accrediting bodies, no agreement upon norms for testing competence. From this point of view the educational background of the Washington correspondents is particularly relevant.

Of 127 members of the press corps, 65 (51.1 per cent) are college graduates in possession of a four-year degree from an accredited institution of higher learning. Thirty-six (28.3 per cent) attended college, but received no degree. Twenty-two of these 36 (17.3 per cent) went to college for only one or two years. Twenty-three correspondents (18.1 per cent) had no college work at all (eight attended high school for less than four years). Two did not have any high school education.

The academic record of the Washington correspondents cannot, obviously, be compared to that of other professional groups, since all lawyers, doctors, teachers or engineers are, *ipso facto*, college graduates and usually have earned higher degrees. But their record is more impressive than that shown by Mr. Harrel's sample group of American editors, managing editors, feature writers and other such workers. The analysis shows that in 1931 only 40.8 per cent of 505 successful journalists in editorial positions were college graduates (as compared to the 51.1 of the press corps), and that 67.4 per cent attended college (92 Washington correspondents would fall in this category—72.4 per cent of the entire group). Whereas

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8.4 per cent of Mr. Harrel's cases did not attend high school, only 1.5 per cent of our group were spared secondary school education.¹⁷

The record of the Washington correspondents who finished their academic work is auspicious. Sixteen were awarded the Phi Beta Kappa honor. Ten won scholarships. Two were graduated *magna cum laude*. Eight members of the press corps received master of arts degrees. Of these, four were Rhodes scholars, completing their university careers at Oxford. Four Washington correspondents included in this study were awarded the honorary LL. D.

MUCH more suggestive for our purposes is the *kind* of education which was chosen by the Washington correspondents. The newspaper man in the capital is today faced by the necessity of reporting news which is a compound of economics, political science, monetary problems, constitutional and international law, public administration, social service. The activity of the New Deal ranges from the field of public works to the esoteric art of encouraging piscatorial copulation. Such responsibilities require intellectual poise, if not specialized competence, in the face of intricate events. A *systematic* approach to the hectic cosmos of Washington would necessitate sophistication in the fields of political economy, in all its ramifications; an *impressionistic* approach, which is the approach of journalism, would profit by at least a limited experience in the disciplines of the social sciences.

The curricular specialization of those correspondents who received

a university education shows a pronounced liberal arts and humanities emphasis, with a corresponding lack of contact with the formal areas of economics, political science or sociology. Of the college men and women of the press corps, 19.6 per cent wrote "liberal arts" as their field of major application; 10.2 per cent were chiefly concerned with journalism;¹⁸ 9.4 per cent had most of their work in English and in pre-legal arts and humanities. Only four correspondents majored in political science; only three in economics. Thus only seven of the newspapermen, 5.4 per cent of the total, may be credited with more than a cursory academic contact with the social sciences.

Now the meaning of these figures is enhanced by remembering that men who are burdened with the duty of recording the events of the contemporary scene would seem to be in need of a disciplined frame of reference within which to orient themselves, and by which to appraise the significance of men, measures and goals. Without some framework within which competing plans and theories (whether of prices, slum clearance or industrial unionization) can be related to an inclusive system, or without some analytic point of view with which to place social phenomena in a perspective of time and a configuration of totality, the observer is left with little but an unsystematized bundle of preferences and an incoherent mélange of impressions. He can do little more than interpret acts and issues according to emotional im-

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 152.

¹⁸ Chiefly correspondents under 37 years of age. The first school of journalism was not founded until 1908; the first department in 1905.

pulses and affective hopes. His insights may be keen and his sensitivity high, but his ability to understand is limited to the one-dimensional sphere of distilled facts.

This is not merely an academic gauge, the validity of which newspaper men challenge. In an anonymous questionnaire submitted to the same 127 Washington correspondents who had supplied data on their educational background, the following statement was contained, to be checked "yes," "no," or "uncertain":

I often feel the need of knowing more economics for my job.

A heavy majority, 86.6 per cent, of those who answered said "yes" (a higher degree of agreement than on all but one other question asked); 10.6 per cent "no"; 2.6 per cent were uncertain.¹⁹ Extensive interviews and personal contacts with more than 150 members of the press corps in the capital over a fourteen-month period lead me to the conclusion that a pronounced majority of the correspondents often feel inadequate to cope with the bewildering complexity of the news they are assigned to cover.²⁰

IT MAY be objected that the newspaper man is not required to be an economist or a social scientist, that his job is to report facts, that his talents should be those of getting news, that his energies should be devoted to accurate and interesting writing. The well-known aphorism of Lionel C. Pro-

bert, former head of the Associated Press bureau in Washington, may be cited to challenge the argument: "The Washington correspondent has got to write news for the milkman in Omaha." The objections are not relevant. What concerns us at this point of analysis is the attitude of the newspaper men themselves to their own adequacy for their tasks. It is the degree of intellectual security with which they can regard the multitude of matters which they are supposed to describe and, in however small measure, clarify to their readers. For men without "a frame of reference" and with an uncontrolled impressionistic (rather than analytic) approach to issues are driven to a surface interpretation of events. They are oriented with reference to normative words of ambiguous content: "liberty," "Americanism," "justice," "democracy," "socialism," "communism." And words are unstable points of anchor in a world of changing words. Newspaper men evidence a marked insecurity in the presence of social theories or political conceptualization. In this light the caustic reportorial reaction to "New Deal professors," "crack-pot theories," "the Brain Trust," "Frankfurter's bright young men" soon suggests the projection of doubts of personal adequacy upon men who have unwittingly increased personal and professional insecurities. The newspaper man compensates for his inner uncertainty (or his inner conviction of incompetence) by lusty deprecations of those whose intellectual equipment he vaguely fears. He soothes his injured sense of self-esteem by the oblique device of irony about those whose respect he

¹⁹ Note that the question was "I often feel the need of knowing more economics for my job."

²⁰ For the effect of this on the corps' attitude to Roosevelt and the New Deal see my article, "President Roosevelt and the Washington Correspondents," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Jan. 1937, p. 36-52.

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would in actuality prefer to enjoy.

These comments are germane to an understanding of the thinking and the non-conscious drives of the newspaper men in the capital. They are especially applicable to the corps since 1933, when the character of Washington news changed, for better or for worse, from news of political personalities and party intrigues to news charged with a high degree of socio-economic content. There were not many professors in the capital ante-1933, nor a deluge of governmental activity which invaded fields where academic competence was imperative.

There is a supporting insight into the attitude of the Washington correspondent in the following excerpts from conversations with various members of the press corps:

"I used to get into a cold sweat when I had to write up Roosevelt's money policy."

"Going off the gold standard was a story that gave me a headache I never want to have again."

"The news has taken a crazy turn. We're used to giving the dope about how Joe Robinson cracks the whip, or why the Chamber of Commerce fought the Zilch bill. Now we've got to write about hogs, unemployment, the price of copper and the interstate commerce clause in the Constitution."

One correspondent sheepishly confessed to me that when Professor

Warren's theories of prices had the ear in the White House, he dutifully read through the treatise of Warren and Pearson on gold. "I got more confused than ever, so I dropped it. I write the stuff up as I understand it. That's more than 99 per cent of my readers will understand anyway."

During the period when monetary problems were the hottest news in the capital many correspondents consulted E. A. Goldenweiser of the Federal Reserve Board, or members of the staff of the Brookings Institution. To these reporters there was a compensation of the kind found in the remark of one veteran newspaper man:

To do the job, what you know or understand isn't important. You've got to know whom to ask. I didn't understand most of what Goldenweiser told me, but I took careful notes and wrote it up verbatim. Let my readers figure it out. I'm their reporter, not their teacher.

And there is a triumphant prop for self-reassurance in this last comment:

I'd like to see the Tugwells or the Frankfurters try to write the stories they're breaking for the girls and boys who read Little Orphan Annie. That would be a laugh. No matter how low I get to feeling, I always know I'm doing a better job than they could.

The Professional Composition of the Washington Press Corps

By Leo C. Rosten

Mr. Rosten's discussion of the social composition of the Washington press corps appeared in the June, 1937, QUARTERLY. Both articles are based on studies he made as a Fellow of the Social Science Research Council.

THE Washington assignment represents a degree of journalistic success which is surpassed by few editorial positions. The members of the press corps have prestige and a security of tenure conspicuously above that of other newspaper men. A Washington correspondent generally leaves the capital only to become an editor, managing editor or editorial writer.¹ Many newspaper men in the capital have preferred to remain in Washington rather than

accept a position nominally more important.

The professional equipment of the members of the press corps is rich; these men and women have demonstrated their competence and reliability, to their superiors at least, in long and varied experience in journalism. The average number of years of newspaper experience for the 127 Washington correspondents who form the subject matter of this study is 18.8. The median number is 16. This includes their entire experience in Washington. The average number of years the newspaper men have served as Washington correspondents is 9.7. The median falls at 8.

An analysis of the number of

¹ The following one-time Washington correspondents for example, have become editors or publishers: A. J. Sinnott (Newark *Evening News*), Roy Roberts (Kansas City *Star*), Charles G. Ross (St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*), George Miller (Detroit *News*), A. H. Kirchhofer (Buffalo *Evening News*), Grafton Wilcox (New York *Herald Tribune*), Ludwell Denny (Indianapolis *Times*), Henry Suydam (Brooklyn *Eagle*).

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years of journalistic experience *prior to promotion to the capital* shows the average to be 9.2; median 7.²

It is interesting to compare the average body of pre-Washington experience for correspondents of different ages. The one-fourth of the newspaper men older than 48 years had 12.4 years of newspaper work before assignment to the capital. The one-fourth who are 38-47 years old today had an average of 10.2 years. The one-fourth between 33-38 had 7.6 years. The one-fourth from 23-33 had only 5.5 years.

It is clear that less journalistic experience is required by editors today than was once the case. These figures may be interpreted thus:

(1) The oldest fourth of the press corps (aged 48-70) had over twice as much training before coming to Washington as the youngest fourth (23-33).

(2) The older half (38-70) had almost twice as much pre-Washington experience as the younger half (23-33).

(3) Correspondents older than 38 years average more than twice as many years of journalistic experience prior to assuming their present duties as correspondents younger than 33.

The ages at which newspaper men were appointed to cover Washington places these facts in bolder form. The average age of appointment is 30, the median is 29. More than half, 57.2 per cent, of the correspondents were sent to the capital between the ages of 21-30. But:

² Analyses of years of journalistic experience exclude nine correspondents, who were born in Washington, D. C., and began their newspaper work in the capital, since their experience and careers are different from those of newspaper men who were *promoted* to Washington.

(1) The oldest fourth of the press corps (48-70) was appointed to Washington at an average age of 36.8.

(2) The fourth between 38-47 was appointed at an average age of 31.2.

(3) The fourth between 33-38 was appointed at an average age of 29.02.

(4) The youngest fourth (23-33) was appointed at an average age of 25.7

The figures show a steady, graduated decline in the ages at which different age-groups of newspaper men were promoted to the capital.

The oldest fourth of the press corps averaged 11 years more of journalistic experience prior to promotion to the capital than the youngest fourth.

These are obviously gross quantitative standards and should be discounted accordingly. The *type* of experience classified as journalistic, and the contemporary competences of different age groups of correspondents, are not considered. But this much is clear: the Washington post was once treated as a stage in the career of a newspaper man, which he achieved by competitive efforts, and with which he was rewarded for his superiority over his colleagues. Seniority played a great role. Until recent years the Washington correspondent, in addition to his regular news dispatches, sent editorials on national affairs to his home office.³ Today this is patently less true. Younger men, and men with less experience, are being sent to Washington.

³ T. C. Crawford, "The Special Correspondent at Washington," *Cosmopolitan*, January, 1892, pp. 351-60.

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THE steady growth in the size of the press corps, the greater concentration of coverage in the capital, the increase in the number of papers having a special Washington correspondent and the increase in the size of the bureaus which individual newspapers maintain, all suggest reasons for a greater demand for younger Washington correspondents. Today newspapers seem to favor the practice of sending their brighter young men to be trained under the older Washington correspondents and to develop, in this way, an earlier and more intense specialized training in national political reporting. Many newspapers regard the Washington post as a necessary training place for future editors, editorial writers, foreign correspondents and the like.

The older correspondent in the capital sometimes complain about the influx of "fair-haired boys," implying that, with the Washington assignment no longer awarded for competence and seniority reasons, a new type of newspaper man is being sent to the capital: a "pet" of the publisher or managing editor, marked for a swift career of success back in his home office, and, indeed, peculiarly sensitive to the kind of news his superiors will receive with most pleasure. In several cases known to this writer these charges seem to be applicable; but it is doubtful whether they apply to a sufficiently large proportion of the younger men in the capital to give them complete credence.

The increased value of younger correspondents today, as against twenty-five years ago, may be found in the fact that, since the younger

men have been educated and trained in a society more conscious of socio-economic problems, they have had to disembarass themselves of less of the "old-school" type of reporting which regarded politics as a simple personality-party struggle, void of deeper social forces, charged with the melodrama of surface maneuvers, one-dimensional in meaning. This writer has heard many older correspondents confess the difficulties of re-orienting themselves, after a long career in orthodox political reporting, when President Roosevelt and the complex purposes of the New Deal tore national politics from its traditional path.

The younger correspondents had greater flexibility of adjustment. Many of them came to Washington with the New Deal, fresh to record and interpret a new type of news unhampered by encrusted news-stereotypes. (Publishers often complain that their Washington representatives become possessed by an insulated "Washington viewpoint"; in the enthusiasm of 1933 they seemed eager to have a new type of political correspondence which would keep step with the march of a new day.) Thirty-nine correspondents and press association reporters have come to the capital since 1933, the advent of the New Deal. Several followed Mr. Roosevelt from Albany to the White House, having developed an acquaintanceship with his personality, methods and staff which it would have been pointless for editors not to put to continued use. Many had gained a certain right to take up Washington correspondence because

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they had covered Roosevelt, rather than Hoover, in the 1932 campaign and were familiarized with the personalities and plans of the emerging New Deal. Some had distinguished themselves as journalistic experts on labor, finance or agriculture and, with these spheres of the national life destined for dramatization, it was natural that editors send them on to the capital.

The record of the last four years leaves little doubt that some of the most intelligible reporting on national affairs, worthy of comparison to the best newspaper work which has come out of the capital, has been contributed by men who have been Washington correspondents for a comparatively short period. The dispatches of "newcomers" in the bureaus of the *New York Times*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Scripps-Howard*, *United Press* and *Associated press* organizations, the *Des Moines Register and Tribune* and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, to name the more conspicuous examples, have been distinguished for competence and insight.

The pre-Washington experience of the press corps may be suggested by the following facts, listed at random:

Nineteen Washington correspondents have been city editors.

Thirteen have been managing editors.

Twelve have been foreign correspondents.

Ten have been editorial writers.

Fifteen have been wire (telegraph) editors.

Twenty-two have served on the copy desk.

Sixteen have had experience in the business or mechanical end of newspaper work: four have been telegraph

operators, two typesetters, three advertising salesmen, three circulation agents, and so on.

Nine correspondents began their journalistic service as copy boys.

IT IS valuable to estimate what may be called the "professional mobility" of the press corps: the number of papers for which correspondents have worked during their careers. It is generally felt that newspaper men "knock around" from one paper to another, that journalism is not characterized by either security or permanence of tenure. The record of the Washington correspondents is relevant to such conceptions, even though the press corps represents a group of journalists who have been more successful, hence more "stable" in their occupational record, than most of the newspaper men in the country.

The ninety special correspondents included in this study have worked for an average of 3.4 papers each. The twenty-seven press association reporters have worked for an average of 2.1 newspapers. The special correspondents have worked for their *present* paper for an average of 12.5 years for the group. (The median is 10.) The press association reporters have worked for their present organization for an average of 11.3 years. (The median is 10.)

How many Washington correspondents entered upon a journalistic career by deliberate choice, through accident, through personal contact with their first employers, through "pull" or for other reasons? These facts are of interest in understanding the general motivations which characterized newspaper men at the beginning of their careers.

TABLE I

REASONS FOR ENTERING JOURNALISM

Reason	No.	Pctg.
Choice (or "desire to write")	96	75.5
Accident	15	11.8
Personal contact	13	10.2
Fathers' "pull" *	3	2.3

* This category was written in by three correspondents.

The figures in Table I may be compared to those of Harrel, who discovered only 49.6 per cent of his 505 cases as having entered journalism by "deliberate planning" and 26.5 per cent by "chance opportunity."⁴ Clearly, the Washington correspondents represent a considerably higher proportion of men who chose to make newspaper work their careers, and a lower proportion who drifted into journalism by accident.

What is the salary of a Washington correspondent? The report of the Treasury Department on salaries of more than \$15,000 in 1934 mentioned figures running as high as \$22,000 for Arthur Sears Henning of the *Chicago Tribune*, or \$18,000 for Arthur Krock, of the *New York Times*.⁵ There are, obviously, salaries considerably larger than those of the majority of the press corps, and they are paid to chiefs of Washington bureaus functioning in a semi-executive capacity, journalists of high standing and prestige.

Eighty-seven Washington correspondents were generous enough to supply this writer with salary information. Because these returns were anonymous the salaries of special correspondents, press association re-

porters, columnists and syndicated writers cannot be treated separately to point out group differences.

The average salary for the eighty-seven correspondents is \$5,987.56 a year. Like all averages, this tends to obscure the extremes. The median salary is \$5,400. One-fifth, 21.8 per cent, of the group receive less than \$3,500 a year. In the salary range less than \$5,000 the percentage is 36.7; 41.3 make between \$5,000-\$7,000 a year. Twenty-one and eight-tenths per cent earn \$7,500 or more a year.

The average salary for the corps is undoubtedly raised sharply by the salaries of several widely syndicated columnists and the heads of press associations and bureaus (who function as executives). It should also be borne in mind that several freelance correspondents, representing half a dozen or more newspapers each, are included. Undoubtedly the average salary of press association reporters in Washington is lower than \$5,987.56 a year, and that of most special correspondents higher. But with whatever qualifications, they are far above the general salaries of newspaperdom. In the fall of 1934 the average weekly salary for the editorial employees of thirty-one representative newspapers (including those in executive positions) was only \$41.81 (about \$2,184 a year). Of these 17.7 per cent earned from \$20 to \$30 a week; 19.6 per cent earned between \$30 and \$40 a week; only 28 per cent had salaries as high as \$50 a week (\$2,600 a year).⁶ Only 11.4 per cent of the Washington correspondents received \$2,600 or less.

⁴ Robert F. Harrel, "Factors Making for Success in Journalism," in *Vocational Studies in Journalism*, by Robert F. Harrel and Walter B. Pitkin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), pp. 150-151.

⁵ *New York Times*, January 8, 1936, p. 13.

⁶ "Salaries and Working Conditions of Newspaper Editorial Employees," *Monthly Labor Review* (Bureau of Labor Statistics), May, 1935, pp. 3-4.

